



STATE OF THE NATION'S RIVER 2010

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Rapid development in the Potomac River region fragments forests and consumes farm acreage

Potomac Conservancy releases its 4th annual State of the Nation's River report

Washington, D.C., Nov. 11— Potomac Conservancy released its fourth annual *State of the Nation's River* report, calling development a primary source of stress on farms, forests, and water quality in the Potomac River region.

The report highlights land use trends in the Potomac River system, including loss of forests and the industrialization of livestock operations. Conditions upstream inevitably affect water quality in downstream communities whose water supply comes from the Potomac, including Washington, DC. The report also looks at the economic and ecological value placed upon wooded and working farmlands, and explores the potential of green infrastructure as a way to accommodate human population growth as well as support natural ecosystem function.

Slightly more than half the land in the Potomac River basin is forested. Healthy tree cover and streamside forests are critical determinants of water quality. "The health of the Chesapeake Bay - its water quality, positive economic impact, and ability to provide high quality recreation and a home for wildlife - hinges on the health and extent of its forests," says Erik Meyers, Vice President for Sustainable Programs, The Conservation Fund. "Nowhere is this more true than for the Potomac River, one of the Bay's principal tributaries."

As illustrated in the report, there are many examples of land use practices, good and bad. One recent example is the wanton clearcutting of more than 1.5 miles of riverfront trees in Loudoun County, Virginia. More than 450 trees were cut down to clear a view for golfers—a move that was completely legal under current county rules. A largely rural area less than 20 years ago, many of Loudoun county's codes and ordinances have not been updated to reflect the realities of sprawl in the 21st century.

Hedrick Belin, Conservancy President, believes that "Through sufficient funding and thoughtful codes and ordinances, county, state, and federal agencies can work with local partners and communities to build a strong network of lands and streams, which will maximize and protect public and private investments

in land conservation and restoration. We must support green infrastructure as a fundamental part of our county-level planning. It's an investment in our future.”

Aimee Weldon, Potomac Conservancy's Senior Director of Restoration and Land, spoke with reporters earlier today about the need for a new system of connected forests, farms and river, known as green infrastructure. “We invest so much in our man-made infrastructure, like roads. I believe that our green infrastructure deserves the same investment...that investment in natural networks of connected lands will strongly support wildlife and provide benefits to human populations.”

A companion document, the 2010 "Potomac Agenda," promotes regulations and funding to preserve our forests and better manage our farmlands in a sustainable fashion. The agenda provides recommendations for state and federal government agencies to collaborate on more cohesive regulations and practices that will protect our water supply.

Potomac Conservancy recommends the following actions:

- Preserve Forests - There should be no net loss of forests.
- Permanently Protect Land - Placing land in conservation easement is a useful tool to protect land from sprawl, keeping the ecosystem intact.
- Expand Conservation Farming - All agricultural land would benefit from “conservation plans” designed to determine which practices best fit each farm and optimize the economic and ecological value of the land.
- Reduce Runoff - Reduce pollution from nutrients, sediment, pesticides, or excess salinity to a level that streams can absorb.
- Improve Farm Compliance - The Environmental Protection Agency and the Chesapeake Bay states must vastly improve the inspection and compliance of factory farms.
- Fund the Farm Bill - As more is expected of farmers, they should receive commensurate support from federal and state governments.
- Research Chemicals - We need to know the effects on human health of pesticides, insecticides, and antibiotics from runoff from agricultural land.
- Provide Small Lot Incentives - State and federal incentives and technical assistance should encourage small lot (1-10 acre) forest landowners to increase and enhance forest coverage.
- Promote Wise Land Management - It is essential that we promote green infrastructure in all 40 counties of the Potomac watershed.

FOR MORE INFORMATION, please visit www.potomac.org or contact *Patricia Brooks*, 202-351-1757; patricia@matchmapmedia.com.

The report can be downloaded at:

www.potomac.org/site/wp-content/uploads/pdfs/sonr10_finalreport.pdf

The Potomac Agenda can be downloaded at:

About Potomac Conservancy

In 2007, Potomac Conservancy graded the health and well-being of the Potomac watershed at a grade of D+. The river's overall health status will be revisited in 2011. In the intervening years, annual updates to the *State of the Nation's River* report highlight issues of importance to residents of the Potomac River region.

Since 1993, the Potomac Conservancy has protected the health, beauty, and enjoyment of the Potomac River and its tributaries. Its conservation programs address the goals of improving water quality, protecting the river's scenic integrity, enhancing recreational resources, and building an informed and engaged constituency, using a range of tools, including restoration, permanent protection, advocacy, and citizen education and engagement. For additional information, visit www.potomac.org.

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